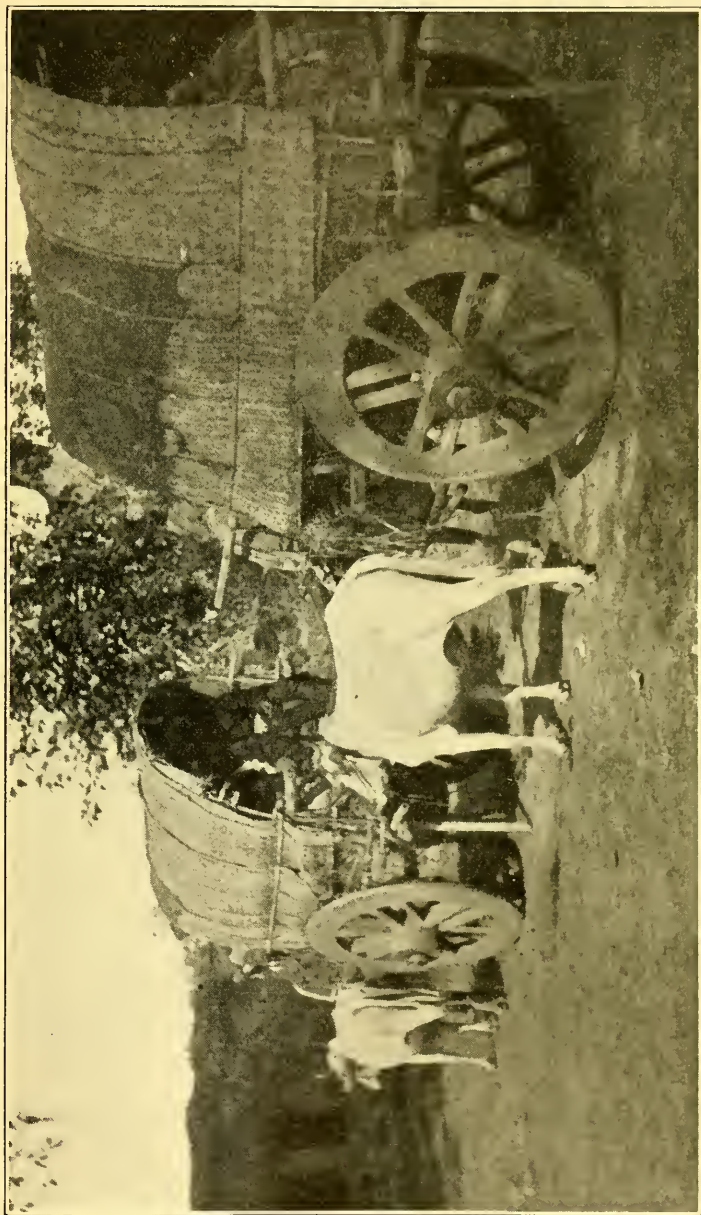


India consists of three clearly demarcated geographical regions—the northern plains (north of the Vindhya mountains), a central region formed by the Deccan plateau, and southern India (the low-lying southern plains and a region stretching up along the south-eastern coast). In the north Sind and the Punjab (the lower valley of the Indus and the fan-shaped region formed by the tributaries of the Indus) are somewhat isolated but belong culturally to northern India. Politically these three regions have, for the most part, developed independently. During the Hindu period it was only under Asoka in the third century B. C. that the north exercised any effective political control over the Deccan. Politically there was much greater mingling and interaction between the Deccan and the South than between the North and the rest of India. Many of the dynasties which ruled the Deccan were northern in origin, although their rule was not dependent politically upon the North. The South was ruled almost exclusively by Dravidian dynasties.

During the eighth century A. D. the Muhammadans overran Sind and continued to maintain themselves there. In the eleventh century A. D. began a long series of Muhammadan invasions from Afghanistan. These, at first, were merely plundering expeditions, but by 1300 A. D. the greater part of northern India had been brought under Muhammadan control, ruled from Delhi. Muhammadan conquest gradually extended over the Deccan until most of the Deccan was brought under the rule of several independent Muhammadan kingdoms. Between 1600 and 1707 A. D. there took place a long and bitter struggle between the Mogul empire in the north and the Muhammadan kingdoms of the Deccan which resulted in complete Mogul control of the Deccan and a nominal extension of Mogul authority over a part of the South. The dissensions of the Muhammadan kingdoms of the Deccan, and the bitter struggle between the Muhammadans of the North and of the Deccan gave an opportunity for the rise of Maratha power in the northwestern part of the Deccan. After the death of Aurangzebe in 1707 A. D. the Mogul empire soon broke up into independent provinces, and the Ma-



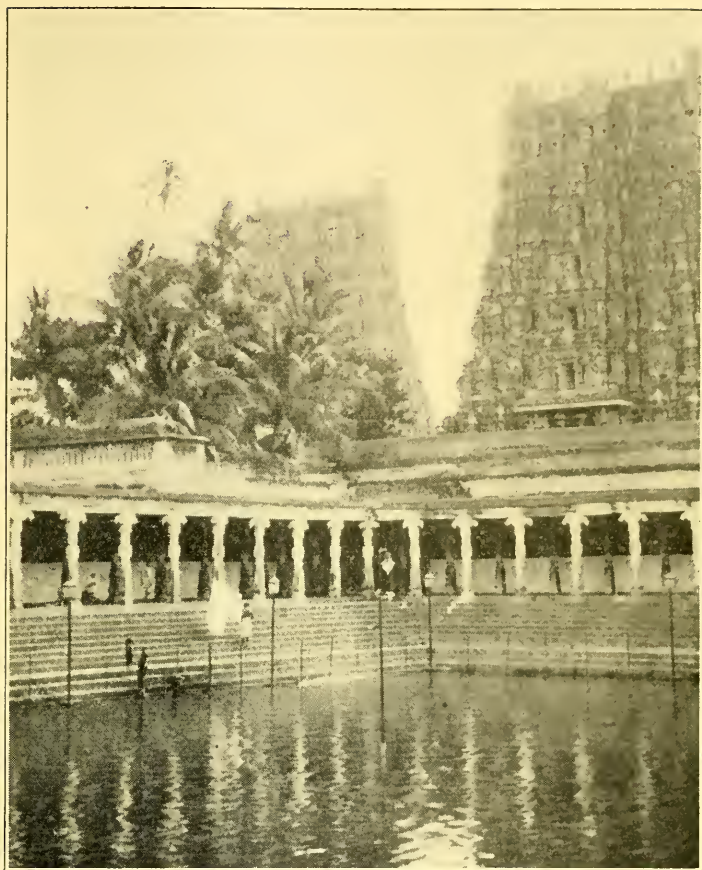
BULLOCK CARTS NEAR NALANDA
Typical village transportation

rathas in the Deccan and the Sikhs in the Punjab developed into strong political powers. A struggle for supremacy was taking place between Muhammadans, Marathas, and Sikhs when the British appeared upon the scene as a fourth contender for dominant political power.

Islam never uprooted or transformed Hinduism, and Hinduism has never been able to absorb Islam. Islam was forced, against its declared policy of giving no quarter to the Infidel, to compromise with Hinduism. Except in the case of the Sikhs no real fusion ever took place between Islam and Hinduism. The Sikhs, who number about three millions, began in the Punjab as a puritanical, reforming religious sect whose doctrines contained both Hindu and Muhammadan elements. Theistic in tendency they rejected image worship and caste and the Brahman priesthood, they refused to accept either the Koran or the sacred books of the Hindus, and compiled a sacred book of their own, the Granth. Muhammadan persecution transformed them into an armed sect, a church militant, and eventually into a nation and a political power. They have always remained independent of Islam and of Hinduism, but with increasingly greater leanings toward Hinduism than towards Islam.

Large numbers of Hindus, many forcibly, were converted to Islam. Islam is strongest and most vigorous in the northwestern part of India, although more than half of the population of Bengal is Muhammadan. The policy of forcible conversion seems to have been stronger there than anywhere else. In the Deccan where persecution was particularly severe, in spite of frequent attempts by the Muhammadan rulers to exterminate the Hindu population, the population continues to be Hindu in the main. It is doubtful whether more than ten per cent of the present eighty million Muhammadans are descendants of Muhammadan invaders. Hinduism has always maintained an intransigent attitude towards Hindus who have been defiled through conversion, even though that defilement was involuntary. Only recently has there developed a more liberal policy which might allow converted Hindus to be received back into the fold.

The three centuries of Muhammadan conquest resulted in great destruction of Indian art and architecture, and of Hindu and Buddhist manuscripts, and the virtual annihilation of the old Hindu nobility and ruling class except in Rajputana. The four centuries of Muhammadan rule left little that was really constructive. More-



TEMPLE TANK AT MADURA

land remarks of the Muslim empire in India, "Its worst incidents were the repression of individual energy, and the concentration on a barren struggle to divide, rather than to increase the annual produce of the country. This was the '*damnosa hereditas*,' the legacy of loss, which Moslem administration left to their successors, and which is so far from final liquidations." Lane-Poole remarks that the most important effects of Muhammadan rule have been the formation of a new vernacular (Urdu which is a fusion of Hindi with Persian and Arabic and Turki elements), a new architecture and art, a few provinces which are still under Muslim rule, and a large Muslim minority which forms such a difficult element in the present political situation.